



## **Maine's Comprehensive State Literacy Plan**



**Stephen L. Bowen, Commissioner**

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## I. About the Plan

The Maine Department of Education (Maine DOE) is fully committed to ensuring that Maine's children are ready for post-secondary education, careers, and civic life by the time they graduate from high school. Maine's learners must be highly literate to accomplish this goal. The Maine Department of Education looks to a recently formed State Literacy Team and the implementation of a comprehensive State Literacy Plan as supportive components to increasing the literacy levels of Maine's learners.

During the fall of 2010, the Maine DOE received a Striving Readers Comprehensive Literacy (SRCL) formula grant. The Department used the funding to establish a Statewide Literacy Team charged with assisting the Maine DOE in the development of a Statewide Literacy Plan. Stakeholders with expertise in the area of literacy from the Department of Education, local school systems, parent and community groups, and institutions of higher education were nominated and invited to serve on the Statewide Literacy Team. The Statewide Literacy Team has guided the development of Maine's comprehensive literacy plan, *Literacy for ME*. The Statewide Literacy Team will continue to meet to guide its implementation.

*Literacy for ME* unifies the efforts of several state agencies and community groups as well as Maine's public schools to provide direction and support to improve literacy achievement. Increasing demands for a variety of literacy skills and rapidly changing technology that affects how we work and how we communicate have combined to highlight the need to modify our perceptions of literacy, literacy instruction, and the role of literacy in our daily lives.

## II. The Big Picture

More than in any other age, today's world demands highly developed literacy skills. For that reason, Maine needs a coordinated approach to cultivating high levels of literacy among its citizens, birth through adult. That is the objective of *Literacy for ME: Maine's Comprehensive State Literacy Plan*.

The Maine Department of Education (Maine DOE) is committed to ensuring that Maine's children are ready for post-secondary education, careers, and civic life by the time they graduate from high school. Helping all Maine residents develop strong literacy skills is a crucial part of that mission, and one that transcends schools and includes everyone in our communities. *Literacy for ME: Maine's Comprehensive State Literacy Plan* offers a roadmap for local communities to bolster their literacy infrastructure with the help of state-level activities that support those efforts.

Through *Literacy for ME*:

- Children and adults will have access to more of the help they need to meet the literacy demands of post-secondary education, careers, and civic life;
- Maine communities will have access to a statewide system of support for evidence-based literacy learning practices across the birth to adult span;
- State-level literacy education efforts will be informed by practices proven effective in local communities;
- Local learning communities will have access to guidance for developing and implementing comprehensive local literacy plans; and
- Cross-agency collaborations will strengthen literacy across the birth to adult span.

### **Literacy: Lifelong Learning and Lifetime Success**

We know this to be true: Maine's students need to leave high school equipped to become lifelong learners, regardless of their plans following graduation. This is not an option; it is a demand today's world makes of all its citizens if they are to succeed. Key to the ability to be a lifelong learner is literacy. More than simply being able to read and write, literacy is the ability to communicate meaningfully in a variety of ways for multiple purposes. While this includes reading and writing, it also encompasses speaking, listening, and viewing.

Success in any avenue of life hinges on good decision-making. This is no less true in today's tech-heavy society, where making informed decisions rides on the ability to read and glean meaning from a broad range of complex texts distributed through an ever-widening variety of technologies. As the wealth of available information grows, Maine's citizens need to be able to evaluate information for credibility, determining which sources are trustworthy and which are not.

Furthermore, Maine's citizens need to be able to communicate effectively. Thoughts, ideas, opinions and information must be conveyed accurately and understandably, be it to a colleague in the next office or to eyes and ears on the other side of the globe.

The lack of these basic literacy skills can prove catastrophic for an individual's financial security and career outlook. The National Assessment of Adult Literacy (NAAL, 2003) found that adults with low levels of literacy are less likely than others to have steady employment, and their earnings are usually significantly less than those of more literate adults. Adults with limited literacy skills are also more likely to live in poverty and receive government assistance (NAAL, 2003).

But the impact isn't only economic. Low literacy levels have implications for civic and cultural life as well. The National Assessment of Adult Literacy found that adults with low levels of literacy were less likely to vote in local, state and national elections than were more literate citizens (NAAL, 2003). It would be no exaggeration, therefore, to suggest that the health of our democracy is tied to the literacy of its citizens.

Research also shows that 85% of brain development occurs by age three and that a child's level of language and early literacy skill development in the first five years of life are indicative of future success in school and the workforce. Indeed, children's oral language skills at the time they enter kindergarten predict their later literacy skills and school success (Dickinson & Tabors, 2001; Duncan et al., 2007; Snow, Burns, & Griffin, 1998), and students who start behind tend to stay behind (Stanovich, 1986).

Students not reading proficiently by the end of the third grade are less likely than their peers to earn a high school diploma (Hernandez, 2011). Even if those students graduate from high school and enroll in college, they are more likely to require remedial courses to catch them up, diminishing their likelihood of earning a post-secondary degree. When they enter the workforce, their employers are more likely to have to spend precious training resources to bolster their reading and writing skills.

The proven importance of providing children with a solid literacy foundation early in life, and the far-reaching impact those skills have on an individual's academic and workplace careers, makes it imperative that Maine take a coordinated and comprehensive approach to literacy.

## **Maine's Comprehensive State Literacy Plan**

*Literacy for ME* addresses ongoing efforts at both the state and local levels, regardless of the funding source or responsible government agency, and orients them toward the same goal: literacy for success in the 21st century. In addition, *Literacy for ME* sets out a vision for unifying these approaches, with the clear goal of equipping all of Maine's citizens with the literacy skills they need to succeed in college, careers, and civic life.

*Literacy for ME* is organized around six critical components:

- Strong leadership
- System-wide commitment and partnerships
- Standards and curriculum
- Instruction and intervention
- Assessment
- Professional learning

Using the components listed above, *Literacy for ME* outlines steps and identifies resources to help educators, parents, and others provide children with a strong early childhood foundation in literacy, provide students with effective literacy teaching throughout their years in school, and extend adult literacy to even higher levels.

*Literacy for ME* details strategies for supporting and encouraging strong leadership. Embedded in the plan are suggested methods for developing partnerships among the various agencies, organizations, and businesses that interact with our children and families. At the same time, the plan addresses what may already be taking place within our schools with regard to curriculum development, clear learning targets for developing literacy skills, and methods for assuring continuous growth of all literacy learners. No less important, *Literacy for ME* also stresses the need to support the continued learning of all professionals relative to literacy development as technology and work transform our perception of literacy.

Separate from the plan itself, *Literacy for ME* also includes a toolkit that provides many of the resources needed to implement the plan. This collection of digital tools, hosted online by the Maine Department of Education and free to all who wish to use it, will continue to grow as needs are identified and solutions developed.

Teaching literacy is not the domain of a single class, a single subject area, or even the 13 years a student spends in public school. It involves the determined efforts of many individuals and organizations, starting with the parents, grandparents, older siblings, and caregivers who engage in rich conversations and spark a love of books. Outside of the home, literacy is the domain of the pediatrician who encourages new parents to read to their children, early educators who provide intentional learning environments that support early language and literacy instruction and promote a culture of inquiry, and the community library where children learn that reading can open up a world of possibilities. It is also the K-12 educators who teach students not only to read literature and write about it, but to navigate and make sense of today's diverse media landscape and rapidly expanding body of information. Acquiring literacy skills does not end with the completion of high school; it is a process in which the student continues to be involved right into adulthood, from the community education classes that teach new immigrants to master the English language, to adult education programs that encourage parents to plant the seeds of literacy in their children.

Helping all Maine residents develop strong literacy skills is a task that transcends schools and includes everyone in our communities – a reality addressed by this plan. For Maine to prosper culturally and economically, *Literacy for ME* must be a priority.

### III. Making the Case

#### Maine's Vision for Literacy

When individuals are highly literate, they are better able to interact as citizens, consumers, employees, and parents. Low literacy levels hinder learning, drastically reduce employment opportunities, limit participation in civic life and negatively impact parenting skills. Realizing the goal of all Maine citizens reaching higher levels of literacy will require a long-term commitment from multiple agencies, a variety of integrated approaches, strong financial resources, and prioritized strategies. The construction and implementation of this state literacy plan will guide ongoing work at the state and local levels that promotes the attainment of this important goal. *Literacy for ME* offers research-supported recommendations, tools, and other resources to support our learning communities, birth to adult, in meeting the challenge and ensuring that all Maine citizens become highly literate. Specifically, *Literacy for ME* is designed to provide a comprehensive plan to:

- Help Maine's children and adults meet the literacy demands of post-secondary education, careers, and civic life;
- Establish a statewide system of support for evidence-based literacy learning practices across the birth to adult span;
- Inform state-level literacy education efforts;
- Provide guidance to local learning communities for developing and implementing comprehensive local literacy plans; and
- Foster cross-agency collaborations that strengthen literacy across the birth to adult span.

**Literacy, as defined by the Maine Department of Education, is the ability to construct and convey meaning for a variety of purposes through an array of contextual forms and symbols, including reading, writing, speaking, listening, and viewing.**

Literacy opens doors to the world. Ensuring that all Maine children enter adulthood equipped to be successful in post-secondary study, careers, and civic life is the ultimate mission of Maine's educational system, and requires proficiency with a variety of literacy-oriented abilities. Reading and understanding a wide-range of complex texts, developing a well supported argument in writing or conversation, accessing and evaluating the quality of information obtained through technology-based tools, and interpreting and applying information presented through an oral presentation are only a few of many abilities literate adults rely on regularly in their daily lives. Strong literacy skills enable humans to be:

- clear and effective communicators;
- self-directed and lifelong learners;
- creative and practical problem solvers;
- responsible and involved citizens; and
- integrative and informed thinkers (*Learning Results: Parameters for Essential Learning, 2007*).



Literacy skills, essential to the health of our democracy and the quality of our culture, have become more important with the explosion of modern communication media. Instruction related to new manifestations of literacy, such as digital and networked information technologies, is crucial for success in the rapidly changing world where learners will be expected to learn and work as adults (Leu, et al., 2007). Effective communication is critical regardless of the devices we use or the distances over which we communicate. Literacy skills make possible communication related to all disciplines across all devices and distances. Without a command of literacy skills, it is difficult to access, think about, understand, or explain the vast amount of content available to us. The need for higher levels of literacy is underscored by the rigorous Common Core State Standards, which Maine has adopted for English Language Arts and mathematics across grades K-12. These standards build students' literacy abilities in a progression that ensures readiness for postsecondary study and careers. While the demands of post-secondary study, careers, and citizenship have increased in the last 50 years, instruction in our K-12 educational system related to the reading and writing of complex texts largely has not, leaving a gap for many of our learners.

## **The State of Literacy in Maine**

*Literacy for ME* is a comprehensive statewide literacy plan aimed at building on Maine's literacy strengths, while addressing current gaps. How effectively is Maine helping our children become highly literate? Some might say we are doing an adequate job, as evidenced by two-thirds of Maine's third through eighth graders meeting the proficient level or greater on State-level reading assessments. Additionally, since 2001, the percentage of public schools offering preschool programs has increased to 29.9% from 10.7% (Donis-Keller, et al., 2010). During the same period, full-day kindergarten programs have become substantially more common. Today, 86% of Maine's school systems have full-day kindergarten, up from 32% in 2001. Additionally, over the past decade, a variety of language- and literacy-related initiatives have been developed and sustained in Maine, helping to strengthen literacy education for Maine's children and families. Some examples include:

- Statewide early learning guidelines for children from birth to age 5, designed to help parents and early learning professionals better understand infant and toddler development and use research-based practices to promote children's early learning and development. These early learning guidelines are divided into two sets: one for infants and toddlers, and another for children ages 3-5.
- A statewide plan for a comprehensive early childhood system developed by the Maine Children's Growth Council.
- Four Early Reading First grants and the first rural Educare Center in United States designed to measurably increase the school readiness of children from low-income families and significantly reduce unnecessary special education costs later on.
- Targeted statewide professional development for K-3 regular educators and K-12 special educators through the Reading First initiative.
- Standards-based education models throughout Maine's K-12 education, adult education, and family literacy systems.

(See Appendix B for more detailed descriptions.)

Additionally, the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI) has brought digital literacy to the forefront in Maine, and has provided both learners and educators with a wide variety of

opportunities to engage in literacy-related learning through technology. Implementation of the Maine Learning Technology Initiative (MLTI) has resulted in 1-to-1 computing for all Maine seventh- and eighth-grade classrooms, 55% of Maine's high schools, and in other grade levels at selected schools. Longitudinal evidence collected through the Maine Education and Research Policy Institute (MEPRI) from the past decade shows that teachers are using the laptops for instructional purposes during class, to customize instruction for individual learners, and for ongoing assessment of learning (Donis-Keller, et al., 2010). Maine educators report that the initiative has enabled them to teach more effectively, efficiently, and in greater depth, as well as extend learners' critical thinking skills and help them to integrate multiple sources of information into their work on a variety of topics (Donis-Keller, et al., 2010). Specific research about the impact of MLTI on student writing has demonstrated that the use of laptops for writing has contributed to a statistically significant increase in student writing achievement at the eighth-grade level, and that the more students use laptops as part of the writing process (planning, drafting, final drafts, etc.), the stronger their performance on assessments (Silvernail and Gritter, 2007). To further support this work, the Maine Legislature passed legislation to provide technical assistance and professional development for instruction in digital literacy for Maine schools and to establish a clearinghouse for information on the use of online learning resources.

While Maine has made many positive gains in literacy education, a close examination of the state's literacy data suggests that we are falling short of our goal to ensure that all children have the literacy skills necessary for success in post-secondary study, careers, and civic life. These gaps can be seen across the birth to adult continuum.

#### **– Early Childhood Indicators of Need**

The experiences learners have in the first five years of life, the influence of caregivers, and the effectiveness of community supports all figure into whether a child is prepared for kindergarten the day he or she arrives in the classroom. Strong families supported by communities and high-quality early care and education play a major role in determining whether children start kindergarten with the ability to be successful learners and readers. Families with sufficient resources are generally at a greater advantage in providing the care and experiences necessary for school readiness. Unfortunately, one in five Maine children under six years old lives in poverty (US Census Bureau 2007-2009). In addition, 65% of Maine's children five and younger have all parents in the workforce. And while high-quality early care and education environments that provide a strong and appropriate early language and literacy foundation are crucial, access and quality are uneven.

Maine encourages quality development in these out-of-home early childhood settings through its voluntary Quality Rating System, Quality for ME, which prescribes performance standards that indicate what is expected of high-quality early childhood programs. Participation in this rating system must grow, however, if Maine is to ensure that more of its youngest citizens receive high-quality learning experiences early in life. Of 1,326 licensed Family Child Care Providers, 43.8% are enrolled in Quality for ME, with only 6% earning the highest rating. Of 708 licensed center based programs, 66.9% are enrolled in Quality for ME, with 29.5% earning the highest rating. While 25% of Maine's elementary schools offer a voluntary public preschool experience, there is no consistent mechanism to ensure strong and appropriate early literacy components are included (Maine DHHS, 2012).

## – School-Age Indicators of Need

Once learners enter Maine’s K-12 educational system, the literacy data reveal that even though at least two-thirds of Maine learners demonstrate proficiency on state level measures of reading comprehension, gaps still exist. As noted in the table below, 27-34% of learners in grades 3-8 are not meeting the reading standard according to the New England Comprehensive Assessment Program (NECAP) reading results. NECAP Writing data from 2010-11 reveal that Maine students’ proficiency rates for writing at grade 5 and 8 are far below those for reading. Less than half (43%) of grade 5 students met the standard for writing, while just over half (53%) of grade 8 students met the writing standard.

### 2010-11 New England Comprehensive Reading and Writing Assessment

| Grade     | % Meeting or Exceeding | % Not Meeting |
|-----------|------------------------|---------------|
| 3 Reading | 69%                    | 31%           |
| 4 Reading | 68%                    | 32%           |
| 5 Reading | 70%                    | 30%           |
| 6 Reading | 72%                    | 28%           |
| 7 Reading | 66%                    | 34%           |
| 8 Reading | 73%                    | 27%           |
| 5 Writing | 43%                    | 57%           |
| 8 Writing | 53%                    | 47%           |

Table 1

Another way to think about Maine’s data is to translate the percentages into the number of learners these percentages represent. Some 24,769 Maine learners across grades 3-8 are not able to read well enough to meet grade level standards. That is enough learners to fill the Cumberland County Civic Center nearly four times! Can Maine afford to have that many learners not reading proficiently?

Performance concerns are also apparent when the NECAP data are disaggregated by student sub-group. The percentage of eighth-grade learners meeting the reading standard in special populations is significantly lower than that of the general population (Table 2). Furthermore, the 2010 NECAP data show that fewer males (63%) are meeting the reading standard than females (76%).

**2010-11 New England Comprehensive Reading Assessment  
Disaggregated Data for 8th Grade Reading**

| <b>Population</b>           | <b>% Meeting or Exceeding</b> | <b>% Not Meeting</b> |
|-----------------------------|-------------------------------|----------------------|
| General                     | 73%                           | 27%                  |
| Limited English Proficiency | 43%                           | 57%                  |
| Economically Disadvantaged  | 61%                           | 39%                  |
| Students with Disabilities  | 29%                           | 71%                  |

Table 2

The proficiency rates of Maine’s 11th graders on the SAT are equally troubling. In 2010, 48% of Maine’s 11th graders scored proficient or better on the reading portion of the SAT, while 47% were proficient on the writing portion. Maine high schools report that challenges related to literacy instruction include poor learner motivation, insufficient funding, and high absenteeism (Donis-Keller, et al., 2010). In 2010, Maine’s dropout rate was 3.46%, which translates to 2,129 students. This has declined since 2007 when it was 5.1%, but still amounts to far too many students dropping out of high school.

An examination of Maine’s National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP) reading data shows similarly concerning patterns. The average scale scores for reading since 1998 show that while the national scores for fourth and eighth graders have increased or remained constant, Maine scores have declined (Table 3). Further, the gap between Maine’s average performance and national performance has steadily narrowed, showing that Maine is losing ground (Table 3).

**National Assessment of Educational Progress (NAEP)  
Average Scale Scores for Reading**

| <b>Grade Level</b> | <b>1998</b> | <b>2007</b> | <b>2009</b> | <b>2011</b> |
|--------------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|-------------|
| National Grade 4   | 213         | 220         | 220         | 220         |
| Maine Grade 4      | 225         | 226         | 224         | 222         |
| National Grade 8   | 261         | 261         | 262         | 264         |
| Maine Grade 8      | 273         | 270         | 268         | 270         |

Table 3

Additionally, the percentage of Maine fourth graders scoring at or above proficient on the NAEP has declined since 2007, dropping from 36% in 2007 to 32% in 2011, while the percentage of Maine eighth graders scoring at or above proficient has increased only slightly between 2007 (37%) and 2011 (38%).

### **– Causes for Concern in Adulthood**

More than 17,000 Maine adults are enrolled in high school completion programs, and more than 3,000 GEDs and adult diplomas are awarded annually, demonstrating the ongoing need for attention to adult literacy. Additionally, more than 16,000 adults participate in adult and family literacy programs, including English as second language programs and parenting skills programs. For many of these adults, low literacy levels have their origin early in life.

As a whole, Maine learners are performing better than the national average, but the number of learners not meeting standards is cause for concern. A recent longitudinal study by the Annie E. Casey Foundation suggests that learners who are not reading proficiently by the end of third grade are four times more likely to leave school without diplomas than those who are reading proficiently (Hernandez, 2011). This statistic is of particular concern when coupled with the finding that nearly sixty percent of all job openings require postsecondary education or training, and success with postsecondary study requires the ability to read and comprehend challenging content and apply that content to problem-solving situations (Carnevale, et al., 2010).

Further, even when learners do graduate from high school, many are not prepared for the literacy demands of post-secondary study, employment, and civic life of the 21st century (Center of Education Policy, 2007). The ever growing need for colleges and universities to provide remedial reading programs for incoming learners (National Center for Education Statistics, 2003), coupled with the billions of dollars private industry invests to bolster the writing skills of entry level workers (National Commission on Writing, 2004), clearly demonstrate the far-reaching economic impact of low-level literacy abilities. Unemployment and lower income levels are the frequent results of school failure and/or underperformance (Organization for Economic Cooperation and Development, 2007).

The well-being of Maine citizens requires us to harness our resources, learn from what is working well and find ways of addressing the remaining literacy challenges to produce stronger literacy achievement.

## IV. Key Components of Comprehensive Literacy Planning

To develop and strengthen language and literacy skills, students must be engaged learners who have access to high-quality instruction and strong models of language usage by peers and adults, have multiple and purposeful opportunities to practice their skills, and receive frequent constructive feedback. Parents, teachers, and other adults must encourage literacy skill development from birth through adulthood, across settings and content areas. As Catherine Snow, eminent early language and literacy researcher, explains, “We should be thinking of reading (literacy) as weight lifting: *you need to keep at it.*” (Snow, 2010) As they encounter challenges, learners at all levels need quality instruction and supports (Alliance for Excellent Education, 2011).

The years from birth through age 5 are a critical time for children’s development and learning, particularly with respect to early language and literacy. Oral language, vocabulary, background knowledge and concept development, comprehension of conversations and simple stories, alphabet and print knowledge, and phonological awareness are all foundational skills that develop during the early childhood years and have strong relationships with learners’ later literacy skill development, such as reading and writing (NIFL, 2008). Parents and caregivers must understand the power of language and its impact on later school success, and attention to language development must begin in the early childhood years before formal schooling. Early childhood curriculum must be intentional and embed strong language and literacy components and strategies. Frequent conversations with adults, reading books and talking about them, and exposure to letters, letter sounds and rhymes in engaging ways are some of the ways in which young learners come to understand language and build foundational literacy skills (National Association of the Education of Young Children, 2009).

As learners progress through elementary school, literacy development must focus heavily on explicit reading, writing, and spelling instruction with particular attention placed on phonemic awareness, phonics, fluency, vocabulary, and comprehension (National Reading Panel, 2000). The goal is that elementary students develop independent reading and writing proficiency that enables them to apply their reading and writing skills more effectively as they learn. Learners begin to explore a variety of genres, both literary and informational, through reading and writing experiences. Opportunities for rich conversations about learning extend the learner’s critical thinking and build vocabulary and comprehension.

Moving into middle and high school classrooms, literacy development is no less important. While many learners may have acquired the ability to read, write, and converse about content and texts at basic levels, they will now need explicit instruction in how to extend these skills to a variety of increasingly complex literacy activities across multiple content areas. Ensuring that adolescent learners develop content-specific reading and writing strategies is paramount, including through the use of sophisticated vocabulary, effective listening and speaking skills, comprehension of a wide-variety of texts, written composition for multiple purposes, the use of inquiry to build understanding, and the application of technology to extend and enhance learning.

Comprehensive literacy plans must also be responsive to the growing need to develop digital literacy. Learners need equitable access to digital resources for literacy tasks, such as reading and writing, and they also need explicit instruction in how to use these resources effectively, including how to address the challenges presented by online reading and writing. These

challenges include evaluating sources, integrating informational sources, and navigating and using links, graphics, and other interactive features. Literacy instruction must also address using internet resources to answer questions and solve problems. Students are surrounded by digital information in the form of text, images, audio, video and combinations of these media. We must teach them how to locate, evaluate, and use this digital information effectively, efficiently, and ethically. For our students to be literate in a digital world, they must become effective consumers, producers, and critics of digital media in all its forms.

In order to ensure that learners at all ages have access to this high-quality instruction, we must focus our efforts on increasing parent and educator capacity through ongoing learning, as well as wise use of data and evidence-based findings to inform systemic reform in our birth-to-adult learning communities. These types of reform cannot take place in isolation, but need to happen across learning communities so learners can transition across age and grade spans, as well as between learning communities, and be assured of high-quality literacy learning opportunities. As the shared responsibility of parents, educators, and community members, helping all individuals achieve high levels of literacy proficiency is of paramount importance to the well-being of not only each individual, but our State. *Literacy for ME* calls for local communities, in partnership with the Maine Department of Education, to take on this responsibility by developing and implementing comprehensive literacy plans that will lead to increased literacy among all Mainers.

Literacy learning is a lifelong process from birth through adulthood. Research indicates that appropriate and necessary components of comprehensive literacy plans that help individuals develop their literacy abilities include:

- **Strong leadership** to coordinate and sustain the effective components of comprehensive literacy programs and partnerships;
- **System-wide commitment for wide reaching, collaborative, and ongoing partnerships** among parents, caregivers, educators, and agencies to promote literacy development from birth through adulthood;
- **Standards and aligned curriculum** for literacy learning that are rigorous and relevant, with careful attention to implementation from birth through adulthood;
- **Explicit, systematic, and engaging instruction**, combined with tiers of intervention to enable individuals to attain their highest levels of literacy;
- **Ongoing monitoring and assessment** of literacy development, and use of this information to guide instruction; and
- **Ongoing professional learning** to continuously improve literacy teaching (Biancarosa, G, and Snow, C.E., 2004; Im, Osborn, & Sanchez, 2007; Torgesen, Houston, Rissman, & Kosanovich, 2007; Carnegie Corporation, 2010).

The components of comprehensive literacy plans listed above should not be foreign to Maine educators. These are the same components recommended in other ongoing initiatives, such as public preschool programs; Response to Intervention planning; Title I Continuous Improvement Plans; and Standards-Based Learning.

Maine's comprehensive statewide literacy plan, *Literacy for ME*, is organized around these components, and calls for local communities to develop and implement comprehensive literacy plans that support literacy and language growth from birth through adulthood. Guidance for how local learning communities – such as public schools and school districts, community-based early childhood providers, and other literacy related organizations – can develop their own

comprehensive literacy plans is provided using each of these components. Recommendations for statewide and regional activities that extend and enhance support for local plan development and implementation are detailed as well. Finally, an electronic toolkit containing resources to support the design and implementation of comprehensive literacy plans will be provided to support comprehensive local plan development.



## V. Local Level Literacy Plan Guidance

In order to systemically plan and implement high-quality literacy education for Maine's learners, local learning communities (i.e. public schools, school districts, community-based early childhood providers, etc.) across the birth-adult span should collaboratively develop and implement comprehensive literacy plans. Local level learning communities may be organized at the city or town level, or may encompass several regionally connected communities within a school system or county. Comprehensive local literacy plans should be organized around the six components detailed in this section. The significance of each component is explained below, and a matrix of action steps that local learning communities should follow to develop, implement, strengthen, and sustain that component of their plan can be found in Appendix A. The matrices are set up so steps can be read in vertical and horizontal fashion, helping educators to identify the steps to take at particular points in the development and implementation of a comprehensive literacy plan. As each component is explored, it may be helpful to reference the matrices of action steps for a more thorough understanding. Embedded in each component are links to resources that local communities can draw upon as they develop and implement their plans, as well as references to materials contained in an electronic toolkit that accompanies *Literacy for ME*.

### • V-A: Strong Leadership

Leadership is paramount to the successful implementation, maintenance, and sustainability of a comprehensive literacy plan at the local level. Research has demonstrated that effective school leadership is positively associated with student learning (Center for Educational Policy Analysis, 2003). Leadership should enable the learning organization to set clear goals for teaching and learning, and should constantly support, through deliberate decision-making, the ability to attain these goals. Those serving in leadership positions must also be knowledgeable about the standards, instructional practices, and assessments that serve as the foundation for teaching and learning. Strong leaders assist organizations in determining which variables (e.g., time, materials, and personnel expertise) the organization controls, and how to utilize those variables to fully support teaching and learning. Strong leadership demonstrates collaborative commitment to the established vision for teaching and learning, sets high expectations, and recognizes successes. Finally, leadership should not be the responsibility of one individual, but should be distributed across multiple roles, including administrators and site directors, literacy coaches and interventionists, grade-level and content-area educators, parents, and community members.

When preparing to develop and implement a comprehensive literacy plan, communities should identify potential sources of leadership that already exist, and should establish a literacy leadership team that works with stakeholders to develop the plan. The leadership team should be composed of representatives from community-based organizations who have collective expertise related to literacy learning, represent a variety of stakeholders that need to be included in literacy-related decisions, and demonstrate investment in improving literacy achievement for all learners. As Jim Collins notes in *Good to Great* (2001), “the right people will be self-motivated by the inner drive to produce the best results and to be part of creating something great” (p. 32). Members of the literacy leadership team will vary across communities, but should include early childhood and school administrators, educators from representative age/grade

spans and content areas across the birth-adult span, literacy coaches (if applicable), special educators, English learner specialists, literacy interventionists, public librarians or school media specialists, technology integrators and coordinators, school board members, parents, and learners. The size of the team will also vary, depending on the size of the community, and team members may represent multiple roles in small communities (e.g., principals may serve as curriculum specialists, interventionists may also be special educators). Teams should meet at regularly to engage in their work.

A local literacy leadership team's initial activities should center on the following activities:

- Utilizing the definition of literacy provided in *Literacy for ME* (p. 5) to establish a vision for what a comprehensive literacy plan should accomplish related to learning and teaching. This should include understanding that literacy is not a discipline, but a shared responsibility that enables learners to develop knowledge, construct and communicate meaning; participate in society; and achieve goals.
- Reviewing the components of comprehensive literacy plans outlined in *Literacy for ME* and investigating the collective and individual roles team members can contribute to the development and implementation of the local plan.
- Conducting a needs assessment (see toolkit for examples) to determine the current status of literacy instruction and the literacy climate in the local community. The needs assessment should involve opportunities for input from a variety of stakeholders, and should include data analysis that identifies current strengths and needs.
- Engaging in professional learning as a team related to system change, leadership of literacy initiatives, research-based literacy standards, instruction and assessment practices, and digital literacy.
- Fostering relationships with partners across the learning communities, such as parents, libraries, schools, early learner and development programs, adult educators, and community literacy organizations.

Once these initial tasks are completed, the team should use the literacy plan components detailed in *Literacy for ME* as a guide for drafting a coherent and comprehensive plan. Specific areas of concern noted in the needs assessment should be addressed in the plan with evidence to support their inclusion, and strengths noted in the needs assessment should also be utilized as supports to the ongoing work. Questions that teams should consider when developing the plans are included in Appendix C.

Once a comprehensive literacy plan has been drafted, the leadership team should share it with school faculty/staff, community programs and other interested stakeholders to gather input, before revising and finalizing the plan. Once finalized, the literacy leadership team should develop a clear timeline for plan implementation and decide which levels of leadership are responsible for oversight of each plan component, what action steps need to be taken to implement the plan, who will be involved at each step, and what resources will be necessary.

As the plan is implemented, the literacy leadership team should provide ongoing support and oversight. Leadership team members will have specific responsibilities related to the plan's implementation, but the collective team needs regular updates on these activities so it can determine the impact of the plan on teaching and learning and make regular adjustments to plan implementation to ensure the best results possible. Ongoing responsibilities of the literacy leadership team are included in Appendix C.

## ● V-B: System-Wide Commitment and Partnerships

A comprehensive literacy system fosters a commitment to coordinating a shared vision that involves families, educators, children, and a representative segment of community members. Comprehensive literacy systems result in well-articulated goals that enable children to develop strong language and literacy abilities. Communication and partnerships must be fostered that connect community efforts at all levels along the birth-adult learning continuum.

Capable children are the basis of a prosperous and sustainable society. Maine's future prosperity is dependent on their success. Literacy development begins in infancy and is the underpinning of all future growth. Engaged families, family supports, and strong early childhood programs provide the foundation for language and literacy growth during the early childhood years. Weak early language and literacy skills negatively impact later academic outcomes. Schools, as part of the literacy learning community, must be prepared to understand language and literacy research across the birth-adult span, community demographics, and existing capacity and resources to help build and foster relationships with families and community programs. Literacy learning community partners across the birth-adult span should respect and foster the multicultural nature of their communities as part of the literacy learning experience.

When children's families and educators interact and communicate regularly, children from all backgrounds are more academically successful and they are more likely to attend school consistently, graduate, and enroll in higher education (Henderson, A. and Mapp, K., 2002). These findings underscore the need for committed partnerships between families, learning organizations, and the broader community.

According to the National Early Literacy Panel (NELP), which conducted a federally funded, comprehensive review of research on early literacy in 2008, there are particular early literacy variables that strongly impact later literacy skills. Local learning community leadership must establish collaborative community and school efforts that build a strong foundational base for all children. The call for collaborative partnerships among schools, families, and community organizations has been made repeatedly by state- and national-level organizations, including the Maine Department of Education in its *A Solid Foundation* (2000) and *Promising Futures* reports (1999), the National Middle School Association in its *This We Believe* report (2003), and the Maine Commission on Middle Level Education's *Bright Futures* report (2009). The foundation for these partnerships must be built upon evidence-based research and data. Partnership efforts should:

- Establish needs based on data;
- Be inclusive and transparent, maximizing both capacity and resources;
- Be seamless across all developmental levels; and
- Result in sustained literacy improvement across all content areas.

Leadership efforts must foster commitment for sustained collaboration across community literacy learning partners, and dedicate time for ongoing professional learning to support partnerships. A supportive, collaborative environment will result in families and children who feel respected, connected, and engaged with partners in their learning communities (Michaels, 2011).

## ● V-C: Standards and Aligned Curriculum

No comprehensive literacy plan would be complete without accounting for the role of rigorous standards and curriculum aligned to those standards. Standards define the knowledge and skills literacy learners should know and be able to do. In a standards-based system of learning, standards hold learning as a constant while treating other traditional factors (e.g. time, location, instructional materials) as variables. Standards:

- Set uniform high expectations and present a clear learning path for learners, educators, and parents to follow;
- Provide a basis of equal opportunities to learn;
- Provide constant learning targets from which curriculum can be developed to guide instruction;
- Ease transitions for students from school to school and age span to age span; and
- Specify assessment content to track student achievement.

In Maine, content area learning targets or standards are in place for children from infancy through secondary graduation. With respect to literacy and language development in early childhood, two sets of learning guidelines help inform parents, caregivers, and educators. At the birth-age 2 span, the *Infant and Toddler Learning Guidelines*, and at the age 3-Kindergarten entry span, the *Early Childhood Learning Guidelines*, contain standards that guide language and literacy development. Beginning in Kindergarten and running through grade 12, the *Common Core State Standards for English Language Arts* are mandated by state law. Adult Education also has content standards for English Language Arts. All four of these standards documents can be located in the toolkit that accompanies this plan. Additionally, standards for other content areas exist that include connections to literacy, such as *A Framework for K-12 Science Education*.

Maine's standards reflect the best available evidence regarding what learners will need to know and be able to do for entry into higher education and the work place. The standards are researched, evidence-based, internationally benchmarked, and rigorous. They are also presented in developmental increments for each age span/grade.

In a comprehensive literacy plan, there should be overlap and agreement among assessment, instruction and intervention, leadership, and standards and curriculum. Early language and literacy standards that guide learning from birth to school entry serve to provide a strong foundation for literacy development. The English language arts standards that begin in Kindergarten include reading, writing, speaking and listening, and language -- content critical to developing lifelong literacy skills across content areas. Educators are responsible for helping learners meet the targets set forth in the standards by providing explicit and systematic instruction and using assessment systems to inform instruction. Instruction and assessment should be directly tied to literacy curriculum that is research-based and closely aligned with the appropriate learning standards. A comprehensive literacy system bridges all content areas and addresses student learning and achievement in a way that is responsive to the literacy needs of each student. Comprehensive literacy plans should demonstrate understanding of language and literacy standards and should support the alignment of curriculum to those standards. In other words, standards-based literacy learning should be learner-focused, developmentally appropriate, and continuously improving.

## ● V-D: Instruction and Intervention

Instruction is at the heart of comprehensive language and literacy planning. When explicit, systematic, and engaging, instruction helps children to acquire the variety of literacy knowledge and skills that will enable them to be productive citizens, workers, and family members. The challenge of language and literacy instruction is to organize and differentiate instruction in ways that meet the needs of all learners—those struggling, those showing competent development, and those performing at advanced levels (Carnegie Foundation, 2010). To meet this challenge, literacy instruction should include a number of key qualities (Carnegie Foundation, 2010). It should be:

- Linked to clear learning standards for reading, writing, listening, speaking, and language at the appropriate age/grade spans birth-adult;
- Tied to research-based skills and strategies across content areas;
- Well sequenced and planned so that learning builds over time;
- Direct and explicit in its delivery, moving learners toward independence through gradual release of responsibility;
- Responsive to learners' individual needs as determined through ongoing assessment;
- Provided in positive environments with a variety of grouping patterns over adequate daily time spans; and
- Integrative of technology resources

Instruction should be delivered responsively through a tiered delivery system in which learners move flexibly. High-quality instruction and intervention, also called *Response to Intervention*, is key to improving literacy achievement for learners (Kamil et al, 2008). Response to intervention is a multi-level prevention system in which students receive instruction based on their level of needs. Instruction or intervention is delivered through levels or tiers of increasing instructional intensity. All learners should receive core literacy instruction in Tier 1. In early childhood settings and elementary classrooms, Tier 1 or core instruction should be provided by regular classroom educators. As learners transition to content-specific classes in middle school and high school, literacy instruction should be integrated into all classes and provided by each content area teacher. The next level of intensive instruction, Tier II instruction, should consist of strategic instruction for learners who, as determined through ongoing assessment, need additional instruction to reinforce core literacy instruction to meet grade level standards. Tier II is typically delivered to small groups of learners with similar needs. The most intensive level of instruction, Tier III instruction, consists of intervention to meet the needs of learners who are significantly at-risk of not meeting grade level standards, and/or for whom Tier II instruction has not been enough to accelerate literacy learning. Group sizes at Tier III should be smaller or individualized. The time span during which learners will require additional tiers of intervention support will vary with the learner and intervention approaches, but the goal is to move learners back to needing only Tier I instruction as soon as possible. Instruction provided through special education and English Language Learner services should be well integrated within the tiered delivery model. At all tiers, learners' progress should be monitored regularly to ensure that instruction is adjusted to meet their changing needs. Instruction should also be learner-centered across each tier. Learners should be assisted in setting goals and helping to plan their instruction so that they grow to be advocates for their learning.

Instruction should utilize researched-based materials and methods aligned to standards and curriculum that meet the needs of learners. An important task in building a comprehensive

literacy plan is reviewing, evaluating, and adopting instructional materials and methods at all tiers of instruction. Instructional materials should also foster learners' interests in content such as science, music, art, and sports. A variety of technology resources should also be integrated in ways that support and extend literacy learning. Additionally, scheduling should accommodate adequate time for each tier of instruction/intervention. Personnel should be highly qualified, and their expertise should be matched to the needs of learners. Educators should be engaged in timely and ongoing professional learning opportunities, and should receive regular feedback on their teaching based on observations and learner assessment data.

Parents should be well informed about instructional targets, and provided with opportunities to learn how to support and extend their children's learning. Extended learning opportunities should also be a part of the comprehensive literacy plan, whether they provide additional instruction for at-risk learners, or chances for all children to learn more about topics that motivate them.

### ● **V-E: Assessment**

A critical element of a comprehensive literacy plan is a well-defined and implemented assessment system. Assessment should be viewed as an ongoing process that involves the use of multiple methods to observe, gather information, and make decisions to inform instruction and enhance student learning. Assessments will take different forms across the birth-adult span, and may include not only academically based tools that measure attainment of literacy skills, but also physical and language development measures that help inform children's overall development. Assessments should be conducted in early childhood and school settings by educators, but may be performed in other settings by professionals such as physicians, school psychologists, and speech and language pathologists. Assessments need to be reliable and valid, and aligned to literacy and language development targets, learning standards, and curriculum. Evidence gathered from multiple measures can be analyzed to:

- Set learning goals for individuals as well as schools/agencies;
- Plan and refine instructional practices to meet learning goals;
- Determine effectiveness of instruction;
- Monitor and document learner growth over time and progress in meeting goals; and
- Set new goals and identify additional instructional practices to support goal achievement.

A well established assessment system includes both formative and summative assessment measures. Formative assessment is ongoing. It is used to provide information about learner progress and to make decisions about adjustments in instruction. Summative assessment is used to evaluate programs and for accountability purposes (Stiggins, et al., 2007).

Formative assessments help educators check and track learners' progress toward grade-level standards throughout the school year, and can serve as powerful tools for students to monitor their own learning. Formative assessments are generally time-efficient and directly linked to the type of literacy instruction learners are receiving. They align with daily learning targets and are helpful in determining what learners know and what they need to learn next. Formative assessments can serve a variety of purposes, as detailed in Table 4.

| Type of Formative Measure                              | Purpose   |
|--|---|
| Screening Assessments                                  | Sample learner's performance on key literacy and language targets to determine if learners are demonstrating appropriate developmental or grade-level performance or whether they might be at risk. |
| Progress Monitoring and Informal Classroom Assessments | Provide evidence of the impact daily instruction is having on literacy and language learning and help determine if learners are making progress toward achieving standards.                         |
| Diagnostic Assessments                                 | Provide in-depth information about learners' literacy and language abilities and needs to help refine instruction and inform decisions about tiers of intervention support.                         |

Table 4

Formative measures are critical to the design of a Response to Intervention framework, as they enable educators to make decisions about the tiers of intervention learners should be receiving to achieve literacy standards.

Summative assessments, sometimes referred to as outcome measures, include state-mandated tests, end-of-year exams, end-of-unit tests, and common school/district assessments. They should also be used to measure how well learners have met performance standards. These measures should track student growth over time against established benchmarks, inform program evaluation, and be used by schools/agencies for accountability purposes.

An effective assessment plan should also include information that will help the school or early childhood program organize its assessment resources and implement its assessment schedule in a timely, but not time-consuming, fashion. A master schedule should be developed to articulate when specific assessments will be administered and by whom. Appropriate training should be provided to educators and assessment teams to ensure proper administration and scoring. Leaders should be appointed to ensure proper coordination of assessments and entry of assessment data into systems that will enable educators to analyze the data.

High-quality assessment systems also ensure that assessment data are analyzed in a timely manner and in a collaborative fashion. Teams of educators who will be using the data to inform ongoing instruction should have regularly scheduled opportunities to examine and discuss the results of assessments. Decisions can be made about tiers of instruction/intervention, and learning patterns across classrooms and subgroups can be disaggregated to inform planning, identify instruction and professional development needs, and to monitor program implementation. Additionally, methods of sharing assessment information with parents and community stakeholders should be determined.

A well developed assessment system will involve learners, as appropriate, in assessment of their own learning. Learners should be able to identify the standards they seek to achieve, be well informed about their progress toward reaching those standards, and be involved in planning next steps they can take to reach these goals.



Finally, use of learners' literacy achievement data is a critical component for planning ongoing professional learning. Learners' literacy data should guide decisions about professional learning opportunities, and should be used to monitor growth of teacher skills and to sustain continuous improvement (National Staff Development Council, 2001).

### ● **V-F: Professional Learning**

Student learning is dependent on the quality of educators (Task Force on Teacher Leadership, 2001), whether those educators are early childhood teachers and practitioners, K-12 teachers, or literacy leaders. Ongoing and job-embedded professional learning is crucial to furthering all educators' knowledge of literacy and language development, standards, curriculum, instruction, and assessment practices and their application of this knowledge to daily practice. For this reason, a comprehensive literacy plan must include attention to professional learning. To make the best decisions about the focus of ongoing professional learning that will lead to improved language and literacy outcomes, data about children's learning should be at the heart of the process. Additionally, whenever expectations for the implementation of new practices are set, professional learning related to the planned change, the role of leadership, and collaboration needs to be provided. Professional learning should be focused on evidence-based content appropriate to the birth-adult span, and directly linked to established literacy targets and identified learner needs.

In a research-based cycle of continuous improvement for literacy learning, a professional learning plan for educators should include the following elements:

#### ● **Collection and Analysis of Data to Set Goals**

The key to data collection is a focus on the learner. Data can be divided into roughly two categories: those data that indicate the status of skill development in a defined area and those data that explore hypotheses to explain that status. Local literacy leadership teams should collect and analyze data about students' language and literacy learning in order to determine strengths and needs related to language and literacy achievement, set goals for improved language and literacy outcomes, and make decisions about professional development that advance them toward those goals. These goals may be specific to particular age spans and should be aligned with broader state and federal expectations. Additionally, the analysis of these data must be well communicated so educators can determine how they will respond.

#### ● **Involvement of Multiple Stakeholders**

Because a comprehensive literacy plan involves multiple stakeholders (e.g., teachers, administrators, parents, community members, etc.) in the analysis of literacy data to determine learner needs, it is critical to the entire improvement process that data be classified and shared in ways that are clear to both education professionals and the public. The added benefit from broad participation at the data analysis and goal setting stages is the building of a shared understanding of educators' needs for continuous learning aimed at addressing student learning needs. Stakeholder involvement in the planning and design of professional development greatly increases the level of buy-in and commitment to the plan. Teachers and the literacy leadership team, along with parents, learners and community members, should work together to determine needs, decide on a course of action, and implement and support a plan that will lead to improved teaching and learning (Guskey and Huberman, 1995).



## • Evidence-Based Content Selection

Content selected for study must be supported by evidence that it can accomplish the goals set for language and literacy learning. A learning community should be confident that the content they choose to study has been found to benefit learner outcomes. A process for selecting content should include:

- A review of research on curricular and instructional innovations with a history of success in language and literacy outcomes;
- A review of current knowledge and practices in the community program/district/school;
- Documentation that the practices are evidence-based; and
- Alignment with Maine's Teaching Standards (Chapter 114).

Through implementation of evidence-based practices and programs, educators will have greater confidence that their instruction and assessment practices will have the greatest likelihood of improving learner performance. Part of the challenge will be to accept the research and be prepared to change policies and practices to reflect it. Educators must examine what is taught, when it is taught, and how it is taught.

## • Deliberate Process Design

In designing the process for professional development, Literacy Leadership Teams must ensure opportunities are in place for professional training, ongoing learning opportunities, and activities that have been shown to result in changes in teacher behaviors. When the objective of learning opportunities is to develop the skilled use of new material, the specific design of professional development must enable participants to practice the new learning. When the material to be learned represents significant departures from existing practice, time for training that includes theory, demonstrations, and early opportunities to practice will need to be allotted (Joyce & Showers, 1981, 2002). Learning opportunities must be designed in ways that enable participants to develop skills with new curricula, instructional strategies, and job-embedded assessments if implementation is to be successful.

## • Components of an Ongoing, Collaborative Cycle

Professional development is a continuous process rather than a one-time event. To be able to transfer new learning into any setting, educators need multiple opportunities to see demonstrations, plan together, work out problems, rehearse new lessons, develop materials, engage in peer coaching, and observe each other. The collaborative routines necessary to support these actions must be planned, supported and monitored so they can be effective at all stages of an educator's career (novice, intermediate, advanced).

Educators working to implement changes in their teaching practice need the benefit of collaborating with peers to solve the problems inherent in learning new behaviors. Moreover, teachers who collaborate with peers become interested in and learn from each other's practices.

Effective, coordinated support initiates or augments collaborations local community learning partners to provide more broad-based interactions and greater support for all learners. Together, schools, families, and communities facilitate learning by alleviating barriers, both external and internal, that interfere with learning and teaching.

- **Meaningful Program Evaluation**

The quality of the evaluation is contingent upon having clearly stated goals for child and student outcomes. A professional learning plan is successful when it achieves its student learning goals.

While ongoing data collection (formative evaluation) entails frequent measurement of targeted outcomes and guides training decisions and program adjustments, program (summative) evaluation addresses the question, “Does this program work?” Measures of program effectiveness generally occur at greater intervals—perhaps yearly—or on whatever schedule a program or district/school has established for taking stock of its progress. Regardless of how the program is evaluated, these data are used in decision-making to plan next steps.

## VI. State-level Recommendations

In order to realize the goals outlined in *Literacy for ME*, specific actions must happen at the State level. This section outlines the recommendations for steps the Maine Department of Education needs to take to support full implementation of this plan. These recommendations are organized by the same essential components necessary for comprehensive literacy plans described previously. Many of the recommendations directly support local development and implementation of comprehensive literacy plans, while others offer specific steps for the Maine DOE to take to strengthen its ongoing work related to literacy education across the birth-adult span. The recommendations are also organized across a continuum of planning, implementation, and sustainability phases.

### • VI-A: Strong Leadership

#### **Beginning to Plan:**

- Convene a State Literacy Team that engages stakeholders and policy makers in a collaborative process to build a knowledge base about the research and issues related to literacy across the birth-adult span, including roles that must be played by state, district, practitioners, and higher education (Team formed 12/2010).
- Establish dedicated staff within and across state agencies to focus on language- and literacy-related policies and programming across the birth-adult span.
- Develop a process for examining state-level language and literacy data at regular intervals, and use this data to set clear goals for language and literacy achievement.
- Shift the Maine DOE's literacy-related consultant responsibilities to emphasizing provision of technical assistance and professional development, rather than ensuring compliance, to support local learning community ability to implement comprehensive literacy plans.

#### **Beginning to Implement:**

- Work with the State Board of Education and other State agencies to set priorities for integrating language and literacy components as part of school and community improvement and accountability efforts, including a call to action for local comprehensive literacy plan development and implementation.
- Develop a comprehensive literacy web link on the Maine Department of Education's website that consolidates literacy-related resources and makes them readily accessible to the public.
- In collaboration with the State Literacy Team, develop a framework and toolkit to guide local communities as they create and implement comprehensive literacy plans (Underway).
- Develop and disseminate a timeline for local comprehensive literacy plan development and implementation.

- Implement a process for examining state-level language and literacy data at regular intervals and utilizing these data to set clear goals for language and literacy achievement.
- Communicate the importance of high-quality early childhood experiences as well as post-secondary and career readiness for language and literacy achievement.

#### **Expanding Emphasis:**

- In collaboration with the State Literacy Team, build public awareness, urgency, and advocacy for literacy as a cultural imperative, rather than a cultural elective.
- Support local communities (schools, districts, early childhood) in establishing and utilizing Literacy Leadership Teams that advocate and lead comprehensive literacy plan development and implementation in their communities by:
- Identifying and providing professional development specific to literacy leaders (e.g. school change processes, clear definitions of literacy and its components, successful research-based literacy practices across the K-12 span, use of walkthroughs and observations, providing feedback to educators, digital literacy, etc.) and
- Identifying and disseminating literacy leadership tools and strategies that utilize technology.
- Develop accountability and oversight mechanisms to ensure that language and literacy related programs are implemented effectively and result in improving children's literacy skills.

#### **Sustaining the Plan:**

- Support local learning communities (schools, districts, early childhood) in ongoing use of Literacy Leadership Teams to advocate and lead language and literacy efforts in their communities by using data to guide continuous improvement efforts at local and state levels.
- Utilize ongoing data examination to inform literacy-related policy and program decision making that supports increasing literacy achievement in Maine.

### **• VI-B: System-wide Commitment and Partnerships**

#### **Beginning To Plan:**

- Investigate State policies and related initiatives that could impact the implementation of a statewide literacy plan as well as comprehensive local level literacy plans.
- Audit current funding sources to identify potential partners to support implementation of the comprehensive literacy plan.
- Identify key state and community leaders who can deliver political, financial, and social capital to support implementation of the comprehensive literacy plan.
- Identify barriers to parental and community engagement in components of the comprehensive literacy plan.
- Develop a resource guide that identifies existing partnerships, programs and initiatives related to literacy across Maine.

- Locate and develop resources to assist communities to develop a shared vision for comprehensive literacy planning.

### **Beginning to Implement:**

- Provide resources to assist communities to develop a shared vision.
- Establish partnerships between State agencies and stakeholders (community organizations, businesses, etc.) that support implementation of the state literacy plan.
- Engage parents in partnerships with school and community resources through educational opportunities that build awareness and expectations for parents to be partners with local community organizations/ schools to support language and literacy development across the birth-adult span.
- Coordinate school and community resources by:
  - a. Convening stakeholders/participants to strengthen and grow resources in place already (encourage public libraries, AE, home visit programs to work cooperatively);
  - b. Building connections between school systems and community based language and literacy organizations/providers (ex. Head Start and transitions) to create shared responsibility for language and literacy development;
  - c. Supporting and planning for transitions across language and literacy learning organizations;
  - d. Identifying and utilizing adult education resources to bolster language and literacy learning, such as family literacy and career pathways; and
  - e. Scaling up successful local or state literacy initiatives that demonstrate system-wide partnerships.

### **Expanding Emphasis**

- Increase home visits to build readiness in the home before formal education entrance and require literacy qualifications for trained personnel providing home visits.
- Connect language and literacy education to the larger business community.
- Develop partnerships among practitioners, administrators, and higher education to create coherent and well-defined language and literacy learning plans and tools.
- Link together community resources on behalf of language and literacy learning (early childhood, school, libraries, health organizations, etc.) by using qualified personnel to deliver services and coordinate connections with and between parents.
- Identify successful literacy initiatives that demonstrate system-wide partnerships, and disseminate information about the characteristics of these initiatives to local literacy learning communities.
- Investigate licensure of childcare facilities and make recommendations about how to include language and literacy requirements.

### **Sustaining the Plan**

- Demonstrate how to build language and literacy related partnerships across communities.
- Connect language and literacy requirements to licensure requirements.

- Promote expansion of successful literacy initiatives that demonstrate system-wide partnerships.

## ● **VI–C: Standards and Curriculum**

### **Beginning to Plan**

- Using the learning standards and guidelines that inform language and literacy achievement in Maine (e.g. Early Learning Guidelines, Common Core State Standards), develop a continuum of language and literacy targets that demonstrate development across the birth to adult span.
- Develop resources to support interpretation and implementation of Maine’s literacy learning standards.
- Research and develop professional learning resources to inform educator understanding of language and literacy development across the birth-adult span.
- Research exemplars of language and literacy curricula aligned to Maine’s literacy learning standards.
- Identify a scope and sequence of language and literacy skills from birth to adult (including English language learners) that educators should know.
- Plan for a cross systems/cross age span literacy conference focused on literacy standards and aligned curriculum.

### **Beginning to Implement**

- Develop and disseminate resources for aligning and articulating standards and curriculum horizontally and vertically within and across learning communities (e.g. schools, districts, early childhood programs) to provide fluid transitions.
- Develop and disseminate resources for assisting learning communities with the alignment of standards and curriculum to instructional materials, learning environments, age/grade-level expectations, assessments, and learner needs.
- Provide technical assistance for developing explicit and systematic language and literacy curricula across the birth-adult span.
- Implement a cross systems/cross age span literacy conference around literacy standards and aligned curriculum.

### **Expanding Emphasis**

- Develop and disseminate resources to support parents with interpretation of language and literacy standards and provide ideas for how parents can support achievement of these standards.
- Develop and disseminate resources for assisting with interpretation of literacy standards across content areas.
- Develop and disseminate resources for aligning curriculum and instructional practices to literacy standards across content areas.
- Examine and articulate workplace literacy skills across all content areas.

- Develop and provide technical assistance to support collaboration and coordination across transition points along the birth-adult learning continuum (e.g. early childhood to primary grades; high school to post-secondary and career)

### **Sustaining the Plan**

- Continue to provide professional learning targeted to language and literacy standards and aligned curriculum as determined through data examination.

## **● VI–D: Instruction and Intervention**

### **Beginning to Plan**

- Identify needs related to language and literacy instruction and intervention across the birth-adult span. (RN at early childhood and adult more than K-12)
- Develop and provide tools related to data identified needs and for coordinating instruction and intervention in language and literacy from birth-adult, including tools for:
  - a. Auditing current instruction and intervention practices, materials, and structures in relation to aligned curriculum and identified student needs to determine instruction and intervention alignment and gaps;
  - b. Creating engaging, motivating, and culturally sensitive learning environments that effectively utilize resources such as time, materials, space;
  - c. Determining if instructional practices are evidence-based;
  - d. Promoting understanding of how technology is redefining language and literacy across the birth-adult span, in conjunction with MLTI; and
  - e. Building partnerships with parents and community resources for language and literacy instruction.

### **Beginning to Implement**

- Continue to provide literacy learning communities with tools and technical assistance for coordinating instruction and intervention in language and literacy from across the birth-adult span.
- Equip learning communities with tools to implement tiered literacy instruction and interventions for all students. These resources may include:
  - a. Clear models for systematic and explicit Tier 1 instructional practices (documents, videos, digital technology, etc) and
  - b. Examples of evidence-based intervention practices (Tier 2 and Tier 3) across the birth-12 span.
- Share the principles of universal design for learning (UDL) and model how the principles fit with tiered instruction.
- Equip teachers with skills and strategies to work with students who are learning English and to understand its impact on their language and literacy development at all ages.

- Develop and disseminate guidance for selecting and incorporating high-interest, age- and topic-appropriate texts that include a wide variety of cultural, linguistic, and demographic groups into the curriculum.
- Develop materials to build parental understanding of appropriate interventions and instruction to support children's language and literacy growth using a variety of resources including technology.

### **Expanding Emphasis**

- Provide technical assistance and tools to assist learning communities in making data-based instruction and intervention decisions, including collaborative data examination meetings that connect assessment to instructional decision making.
- Provide technical assistance and tools for intentional, explicit literacy instruction across content areas.
- Provide technical assistance and tools for improving instructional practices through coaching and routine observations of instruction with feedback.
- Provide technical assistance related to strengthening parent and community partnerships for literacy learning.

### **Sustaining the Plan**

- Provide technical assistance related to expanding real world applications of literacy skills.
- Provide technical assistance related to extended learning opportunities (before school, after school, weekends, etc.) to increase instructional time.

## **● VI–E: Assessment**

### **Beginning To Plan**

- Provide a clear definition of literacy assessment to guide local comprehensive literacy plan development.
- Identify needs for professional development around assessment, including:
  - a. Purposes of assessment
  - b. Methods of literacy assessment
  - c. Use of assessment data
  - d. The role of technology as it relates to assessment

### **Beginning To Implement**

- Develop and disseminate guidance about selection and use of reliable and valid assessments for language and literacy development across the birth-20 span, including English language learners and students with special needs. (RN)
- Develop and disseminate guidance about use of technology in assessment.
- Build capacity for progress monitoring (purposes, tools, and transitions) in local communities across the birth-adult span so that progress data are shared continuously.



- Develop guidance and training for use of data from universal screening, formative progress monitoring, diagnostic, and adaptive assessments in order to set appropriate learning targets, identify and respond to the instructional needs of learners, and evaluate the quality of implementation and impact. (RN)

### **Expanding Emphasis**

- Develop and disseminate guidance for data team meeting structures.
- Examine certification requirements related to assessment knowledge, and make recommendations about modifications to certifications that insure adequate assessment knowledge.
- Advocate for pre-service and in-service teacher education programs to include adequate assessment knowledge and skills relevant to language and literacy.
- Provide technical assistance for development of literacy assessment reporting tools for sharing information with families and communities.

### **Sustaining the Plan**

- Continue to provide technical assistance to support language and literacy assessment.

## **● VI–F: Professional Learning**

### **Beginning to Plan:**

- Locate resources to assist communities in developing a survey of learning needs.
- Identify barriers to implementing professional learning.
- Develop guidance and examples for developing community wide professional learning action plans.
- Identify available professional learning resources (human, media, literature) related to language and literacy.
- Audit current funding sources for professional learning.
- Examine how state policies on teacher pre-preparation, professional development, and certification ensure that educators have adequate language and literacy teaching skills, and make recommendations about modifications to these policies.

### **Beginning to Implement**

- Highlight strengths and gaps in statewide professional learning using data.
- Assist communities in utilizing tools for surveying learning needs of all educators.
- Establish policies around teacher professionalism and professional learning that support instructional improvement and define clear expectations for effective instructional literacy practices grounded in research.
- Examine the current certification requirements for language and literacy in the early childhood, K-8, 9-12, special education, English language learner, special educator, literacy specialist, curriculum coordinator, and administrator endorsements, and make recommendations for strengthening the language and literacy requirements of these endorsements.

- Ensure that teacher preparation programs and professional learning for educators across the birth-adult span are aligned to standards and competencies for evidence based language and literacy instruction.
- Expand the continuum of educators that should engage in professional learning to include all adults who impact language and literacy development in children, including school personnel and parents.
- Build and maintain a statewide collaborative system of regional professional learning in research based literacy practices to promote learners achievement of 21st Century Literacy skills, including use of web-based resources and expansion of successful Literacy networking models.
- Explore models for measuring professional learning.

### **Expanding the Emphasis**

- Adopt recommendations to strengthen the certification requirements for language and literacy in the early childhood, K-8, 9-12, special education, English language learner, special educator, literacy specialist, curriculum coordinator, and administrator endorsements.
- Investigate methods/structures for engaging in professional learning opportunities during the work day.
- Institute literacy coaching models for schools and promote ongoing job-embedded professional learning for educators.
- Explore the development of a separate literacy coaching certificate to promote job-embedded professional learning related to language and literacy.
- Explore the development of an early literacy and/or early ELL literacy specialist certificate.
- Create opportunities for professional learning practitioners to share practices and resources related to language and literacy.
- Use data to measure the effects of professional learning.

### **Sustaining the Plan**

- Consider instituting an annual literacy institute model to support professional learning across the birth-adult span.
- Develop and disseminate professional development that targets data-identified educator learning needs related to language and literacy.

## VII. Call to Action

Strong language and literacy skills are foundational to lifelong learning, success in careers, participation in civic life, and economic prosperity. The demands of the 21st century require higher levels of literacy than we have ever seen, and currently our collective ability to support literacy learning is not keeping pace with these demands. While Maine has made some positive steps in the right direction, more rigorous efforts are needed, and the pace of those efforts must be accelerated, if we are to realize levels of literacy required in our technology-based, globalized world.

Ensuring that all Mainers have the opportunity to develop high levels of literacy is a shared responsibility of community members across the birth-to-adult spectrum. *Literacy for ME* outlines a comprehensive plan to guide a systematic approach to building local community support for ongoing literacy learning as well to guide State-level support. The research-based components outlined in *Literacy for ME* set forth a clear path to strengthen literacy achievement among Mainers from the time they are born throughout their adult lives. These components set high expectations for continuous literacy growth, and call for communities to band together to make literacy achievement a key goal. While there will be costs associated with implementing this plan, the costs of not doing so will be much higher.

For Maine to prosper economically and socially, *Literacy for ME* must be a priority.

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## IX. Appendices

### Appendix A: Matrices for Local Plan Development

#### Strong Leadership

| Beginning to Plan  | Beginning to Implement  | Expanding Emphasis   | Sustaining Plan  |
|--|---|--|--|
| Establish a Literacy Leadership Team that includes cross-agency and/or community partners, to work with staff to develop, implement, and monitor a research-based, comprehensive literacy plan.  | Guide implementation and refinement of the comprehensive literacy plan. Include Birth-Adult stakeholders in the process.  | Review and refine comprehensive literacy plan goals and objectives, according to the results of learner achievement, and continue implementation.<br><br>Identify and commit adequate fiscal and other resources that move effective practices to full implementation. | Systematically measure the progress of implementation of the comprehensive literacy plan goals.<br><br>Identify and commit adequate fiscal and other resources to ensure sustainability. |
| Conduct a needs assessment that includes analysis of early literacy and school readiness data, Kindergarten screening data, current literacy achievement data, current literacy practices, and identification of variables (e.g., scheduling, use of time, and personnel expertise) within the school and/or organization's control. | Collect multiple sources of evidence (e.g., learner achievement data, and teacher observation data.) to track impact of literacy plan implementation, monitor its implementation, and revise plan as necessary. | Continue to collect multiple sources of evidence (e.g., learner achievement data and teacher observation data) to track impact of literacy plan implementation, monitor its implementation, and revise plan as necessary.  | Utilize sources of evidence to make decisions about which practices to sustain over time and policies to establish to support plan sustainability.                                       |

| <b>Beginning to Plan</b>  | <b>Beginning to Implement</b>   | <b>Expanding Emphasis</b>   | <b>Sustaining Plan</b>  |
|---|---|---|---|
| Engage in professional learning focused on the role of leadership with respect to managing systemic change and research-based literacy practices appropriate to the age span.   | Implement a variety of ongoing professional learning opportunities/structures connected to comprehensive literacy plan content, literacy goals, and identified learner needs. | Provide follow-up professional learning and technical assistance to meet individual teacher needs (determined by learner achievement data), including regular peer observations.          | Continue to support the literacy focus by optimizing funds to ensure highly-qualified staff through ongoing professional learning to reach literacy goals.                        |
| Identify multiple levels (i.e. Literacy Leadership Team, principal, child care director, literacy coach, grade level team, etc.) and functions of leadership necessary to carry out a comprehensive literacy plan, including attention to both infrastructure and implementation. | Assign duties and schedules to match staff expertise with identified learner needs.   | Re-assign staff as needed, matching the most effective teachers with the neediest learners, and recruit new staff based on their ability to accomplish comprehensive literacy plan goals. | Adopt hiring practices that are in alignment with comprehensive literacy plan goals.  |
| Identify and establish structures/norms/protocols for regular collaboration of staff utilizing learner literacy achievement data to inform planning for instruction.  | Implement regular collaboration of staff utilizing learner literacy achievement data to inform planning for instruction.  | Continue to increase time and supports for teachers and staff to participate in regular collaboration meetings dedicated to data examination and instructional planning.                  | Institutionalize expectations and structures for regular collaboration meetings dedicated to data examination and instructional planning.   |
| Explore the establishment of a tiered system of differentiated instructional support for literacy learning to ensure that “failure is not an option”  | Guide the establishment of a tiered system of differentiated instructional support for literacy learning  | Refine and strengthen a tiered system of differentiated instructional support for literacy learning   | Define and institutionalize instruction and assessment practices that have led to increased literacy achievement within the tiered system of differentiated instructional support |



| <b>Beginning to Plan</b>  | <b>Beginning to Implement</b>   | <b>Expanding Emphasis</b>   | <b>Sustaining Plan</b>  |
|---|---|---|---|
| Explore the qualities of a learner-centered, responsive climate of collaboration and shared decision making that promotes and celebrates literacy achievement.                                  | Support implementation of a learner-centered, responsive climate of collaboration and shared decision making that promotes and celebrates literacy achievement. | Continue to support a learner-centered, responsive climate of collaboration and shared decision making that promotes and celebrates literacy achievement. | Institutionalize the practices that have led to a learner-centered, responsive climate of collaboration and shared decision making that promotes and celebrates literacy achievement.                           |
| Identify and establish structures/tools for monitoring implementation of the comprehensive literacy plan, including regular observations.   | Monitor adherence to and appropriate implementation of required instruction and assessment practices.   | Monitor appropriate implementation of comprehensive literacy plan components.   | Adjust, as needed, appropriate implementation of comprehensive literacy plan components.  |
| Identify and establish systems of communication for sharing information with staff and stakeholders. Include system of transition across learning communities across the birth-adult continuum. | Implement a system of communication for sharing information with staff and stakeholders.  | Maintain a system of communication for sharing information with staff and stakeholders.   | Sustain a system of communication for sharing information with staff and stakeholders.  |
| Explore relationships with community partners, including parents, to connect literacy efforts.  | Establish community partnerships to support comprehensive literacy plan implementation.   | Utilize community partnerships to strengthen and increase successful practices.   | Engage in activities to broaden connections with additional community partners and to explore ways other organizations have successfully improved literacy achievement to gain valuable insights and new ideas. |

## System-Wide Commitment and Partnerships

| Beginning to Plan   | Beginning to Implement   | Expanding Emphasis   | Sustaining Plan  |
|---|--|--|--|
| Identify and evaluate existing initiatives and partnerships related to literacy programming at the appropriate birth-adult span(s), both within the learning community (intra) and outside the learning community (inter)   | Build on successful partnerships and identify new needs/approaches | Involve learners and parents in identifying literacy needs and developing partnering strategies  | Monitor effectiveness of literacy related partnerships.  |
| Create a shared vision for collaborative partnership initiatives that promote literacy learning across and between learning communities in the birth-adult span (i.e. schools, districts, early childhood providers, etc.). | Establish collaborative partnerships                               | Develop a plan to link or coordinate activities and/or programs across collaborative partnerships  | Revisit vision, capacity and needs<br><br>Evaluate fiscal capacity for programming - Identify potential fiscal resources |
| Identify/involve additional community partners (i.e. early childhood, Head Start, after school programs, community libraries, business, family literacy, home visiting, Parent support programs, media, other)              | Establish and define partnerships with community partners          | Involve media in community activities and events for wider community exposure<br><br>Involve community to identify employment literacy needs | Maintain reciprocal relationships with community organizations   |

## Standards and Aligned Curriculum

| <b>Beginning to Plan</b>   | <b>Beginning to Implement</b>  | <b>Expanding Emphasis</b>  | <b>Sustaining Plan</b>   |
|--|--|--|--|
| Schedule professional learning on research-based language and literacy development, standards, and curriculum alignment from birth-adulthood.                    | Provide professional learning targeted to appropriate areas of need as determined through standard examination and curriculum alignment.                   | Continue to provide professional learning targeted to appropriate areas of need as determined through data examination   | Continue to provide professional learning targeted to appropriate areas of need as determined through data examination                                   |
| Review State standards and guidelines for literacy development across the birth-adult span.  | Ensure that language and literacy curriculum is aligned to State learning guidelines and standards.  | Articulate curriculum horizontally and vertically within and across learning communities (i.e. schools, districts, early childhood programs) to provide fluid transitions. | Refine and strengthen transitions across learning communities (i.e. schools, districts, early childhood programs).                                       |
| Review and select language and literacy curricula that is research-based, differentiated, and aligned with State language and literacy guidelines and standards. | Implement research-based, differentiated language and literacy curricula that allow for continuous progress for all students to meet their learning needs. | Monitor research-based, differentiated language and literacy curricula that allow for continuous progress for all students to meet their learning needs.                   | Monitor research-based, differentiated language and literacy curricula that allow for continuous progress for all students to meet their learning needs. |
| Analyze instructional materials and learning environments for alignment with standards/guidelines and curriculum.  | Utilize instructional materials and learning environments aligned to standards/guidelines and curriculum.  | Refine use of instructional materials and learning environments based on assessment of learner needs.  | Refine use of instructional materials and learning environments based on assessment of learner needs.  |

| <b>Beginning to Plan</b>   | <b>Beginning to Implement</b>   | <b>Expanding Emphasis</b>   | <b>Sustaining Plan</b>  |
|--|---|---|---|
| Explore tools for inventorying learner interests.  | Inventory learner interests and use results to inform selection of instructional materials<br>( <a href="http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/teenreading/tipsenc/reading_interest_survey.pdf">http://www.ala.org/ala/mgrps/divs/yalsa/teenreading/tipsenc/reading_interest_survey.pdf</a> ) | Expand collection of materials and learning experiences that match learner interests and curriculum implementation. | Expand meaningful and motivating opportunities for learners to practice literate abilities throughout the language and literacy curriculum. |
| Explore methods for supporting parent and community understanding of developmentally appropriate language and literacy standards and guidelines. | Support parent and community understanding of developmentally appropriate language and literacy standards and guidelines.   | Expand family and community involvement in language and literacy learning opportunities for learners.               | Continue to expand family and community involvement in language and literacy learning opportunities for learners.                           |

## Instruction and Intervention

| Beginning to Plan   | Beginning to Implement   | Expanding Emphasis   | Sustaining Plan  |
|---|--|--|--|
| Research and identify essential elements of core language and literacy instruction for learners in the targeted age/grade span and across content areas across the birth-adult span; including language and literacy skills; instructional pedagogy, interventions; engagement and motivation; time allocation; data-based decision making; differentiation for diverse learners; and integrated use of technology. | With fidelity, implement research-based, core literacy instruction for all learners that is engaging, explicit, systematic, and utilizes a variety of instructional grouping patterns (whole, small, partner, individual, and independent) | Continue to implement research-based, core literacy instruction for all learners                             | Refine and modify instruction based on current research and learner needs<br><br>Institutionalize instructional practices that have demonstrated positive impact on student learning |
| Examine data collected through needs assessment to determine current instructional alignment and gaps, as well as student learning strengths and needs  | Analyze learner assessment and teacher observation data to determine impact of ongoing instructional practices<br><br>Provide educators with frequent feedback on their instructional practices collected through regular observations     | Refine and modify instruction based on current research and learner needs determined through assessment data | Remain focused on improved student learning by continuously analyzing data for impact of instruction on learner achievement and refining practices accordingly                       |

| <b>Beginning to Plan</b>  | <b>Beginning to Implement</b>   | <b>Expanding Emphasis</b>  | <b>Sustaining Plan</b>  |
|---|---|--|---|
| Set clear guidelines for a fluid, tiered instructional delivery model that includes core instruction for all learners, and supplemental and intensive interventions for learners not meeting age/grade level literacy expectations  | Using multiple sources of data to determine learning needs, provide tiers of literacy intervention by well qualified educators to learners who have diverse learning needs and/or are not meeting or exceeding age/grade level expectations | Research and add additional intervention approaches as warranted by identified learner needs<br><br>Encourage sharing of effective instructional practices and interventions during regular collaboration meetings | Refine and modify intervention practices and approaches as warranted by learner assessment data   |
| Examine current scheduling and personnel expertise to inform provision of literacy instruction and intervention.<br><br>Build a master schedule to accommodate adequate uninterrupted time for all tiers of literacy instruction that matches educator expertise with learners' needs | Ensure scheduling enables adequate time for core literacy instruction and for tiers of intervention to be provided by the most qualified staff  | Adjust scheduling of core instruction and tiers of intervention to maximize learning resources for students  | Institutionalize scheduling practices that have resulted in learner literacy achievement gains and make adjustments to improve scheduling when literacy achievement has been compromised. |

| <b>Beginning to Plan</b>  | <b>Beginning to Implement</b>  | <b>Expanding Emphasis</b>  | <b>Sustaining Plan</b>  |
|---|--|--|---|
| <p>Inventory instructional materials and interventions currently available and analyze their alignment with curriculum and identified student learning needs</p> <p>Research and select instructional materials</p> | <p>Utilize instructional materials/resources aligned to learners' instructional needs</p>  | <p>Refine use of instructional materials/resources to meet learners' instructional needs</p>   | <p>Budget funding for replenishing instructional materials, and for provision and expansion of materials to support further refinement of instruction, particularly for diverse learners</p>                        |
| <p>Establish positive learning environments that promote learner engagement and self-directed learning, and provide constructive feedback on learning progress</p>  | <p>Integrate curriculum with student selected learning opportunities and real world applications</p>   | <p>Explore and implement extended learning opportunities (i.e. before and after school, during vacations, etc.).</p>   | <p>Continue to expand opportunities for student selected learning opportunities</p>   |
| <p>Plan for regular opportunities for structured educator collaboration meetings to plan instruction that is informed by assessment information</p>   | <p>Provide regular opportunities for structured educator collaboration meetings which include the transition from preschool to kindergarten and to plan instruction that is informed by assessment information</p> | <p>Refine and expand opportunities for structured educator collaboration meetings which include the transition from preschool to kindergarten and to plan instruction that is informed by assessment information</p> | <p>Institutionalize opportunities for structured educator collaboration meetings which include the transition from preschool to kindergarten and to plan instruction that is informed by assessment information</p> |

| <b>Beginning to Plan</b>   | <b>Beginning to Implement</b>  | <b>Expanding Emphasis</b>  | <b>Sustaining Plan</b>   |
|--|--|--|--|
| Plan and provide professional learning opportunities based on needs assessment, literacy standards and curriculum, and identified student and educator learning needs, including training in the use of specific instructional practices and interventions | Provide ongoing professional learning opportunities, including literacy coaching and peer observations, related to improving instruction and intervention based on data-identified needs for all staff   | Differentiate and provide follow-up professional learning based upon student assessment and teacher observation data<br><br>Provide focused support to new teachers related to explicit core instruction | Continue to differentiate and provide ongoing professional learning based upon student assessment and teacher observation data<br><br>Provide focused support to new teachers related to explicit core instruction |
| Explore methods for engaging parents in promoting rich literacy experiences for their children, and plan opportunities to extend parents' learning about ways they can support their children's language and literacy development                          | Establish partnerships with parents and community resources that enhance instruction and provide additional practice opportunities for learners<br><br>Provide opportunities for parents to further their capacity for supporting their children's literacy learning | Continue to expand partnerships with parents and community resources (such as home visiting) that enhance instruction and provide additional practice opportunities for learners                         | Explore innovative partnerships with parents and community resources that enhance instruction and provide additional practice opportunities for learners   |



## Assessment

| Beginning to Plan   | Beginning to Implement  | Expanding Emphasis   | Sustaining Plan  |
|---|---|--|--|
| <p>Research and select valid and reliable formative and summative assessment measures linked to language and literacy goals and aligned with literacy standards and curriculum at appropriate age/grade spans across the birth-adult continuum.</p> <p>Develop an assessment calendar and data collection plan for administering, storing, analyzing, and disseminating assessment results that includes use of screening, progress monitoring, diagnostic, and outcome measures to guide instructional decisions across a tiered intervention model (RTI).</p> | <p>Administer formative and summative assessments; input, analyze, and disseminate data according to the established plan.</p> <p>Analyze and document learning and growth through a variety of formative and summative assessments, as well as anecdotal notes, observations, work samples, and multi-media.</p> | <p>Analyze and disaggregate data by subgroups to determine learner achievement of literacy goals and annual yearly progress, and identify continued literacy and language learning needs. Share findings with Literacy Leadership Team.</p> <p>Use assessment results to change instructional practices and strategies, adjust curriculum, and make changes to the instructional schedule and classroom environment that will result in increased learner achievement.</p> | <p>Utilize assessment data to evaluate and adjust the effectiveness of programs and policies, to redefine literacy improvement goals, and to adjust curriculum to eliminate gaps.</p> <p>Use data to inform budget decisions aligned with literacy priorities.</p> |
| <p>Evaluate technology infrastructure capacity to support test administration, analysis, and dissemination of results.</p>  | <p>If necessary, upgrade technology infrastructure to support assessment administration, analysis, and dissemination.</p>   | <p>Continue to adjust technology infrastructure to fine tune its use with administration, analysis, and dissemination of assessment results.</p>   | <p>Plan for budgetary considerations related to technology infrastructure for assessment.</p>  |

| <b>Beginning to Plan</b>  | <b>Beginning to Implement</b>   | <b>Expanding Emphasis</b>   | <b>Sustaining Plan</b>   |
|---|---|---|--|
| Identify and train staff who will administer assessments to ensure standardization and accurate data collection.  | Establish and implement procedures for insuring fidelity of assessment administration and use.  | Provide continued professional learning for all staff who administer and utilize assessments.   | Provide continued professional learning for all staff who administer and utilize assessments.  |
| Provide professional learning regarding the forms and purposes of formative and summative assessment for all educators who will be using the data.                    | Provide ongoing professional learning opportunities to enhance educators' interpretation and utilization of data to inform instruction.   | Provide ongoing professional learning opportunities to develop increasingly sophisticated abilities to interpret and utilize data to inform instruction.                        | Continue to provide ongoing professional learning opportunities to develop increasingly sophisticated abilities to interpret and utilize data to inform instruction. |
| Establish structures and protocols for educators to use to analyze assessment data and schedule regular opportunities for these data collaboration meetings to occur. | Implement structures and procedures for reviewing and analyzing data in collaborative educator teams.   | In collaborative teams, utilize assessment results to make informed decisions about learner placement and instruction/ intervention, and to monitor learner progress over time. | Continue to analyze learner data in collaborative teams with increasing sophistication.  |
| Research methods to increase learner involvement in the assessment process.   | <p>Provide multiple opportunities through different modalities for learners to demonstrate abilities, including goal setting and self-reflection.</p> <p>Provide timely and descriptive feedback to learners.</p> | Increase involvement of learners in the assessment process.   | Refine methods of involving learners in the assessment process.  |

| <b>Beginning to Plan</b>  | <b>Beginning to Implement</b>  | <b>Expanding Emphasis</b>  | <b>Sustaining Plan</b>   |
|---|--|--|--|
| Research methods for training and resources for parents and other stakeholders to support their understanding of assessment information and its connection to ways they can support learners outside of school. | Provide training and resources for parents and other stakeholders to support their understanding of assessment information and its connection to ways they can support learners outside of school. | With learners, parents, and community stakeholders, communicate assessment results and celebrate learner achievement improvements documented through data and brainstorm additional ways of addressing continued student learning needs. | With learners, parents, and community stakeholders, continue to communicate assessment results and celebrate learner achievement improvements documented through data and brainstorm additional ways of addressing continued student learning needs. |

## Professional Learning

| Beginning to Plan  | Beginning to Implement  | Expanding Emphasis   | Sustaining Plan   |
|--|---|--|---|
| Ensure that all appropriate stakeholders are at the table during critical planning and decision-making activities.   | Continue annual meetings with stakeholders.   | Involve stakeholders in an assessment of professional development goals and structures.  | Involve stakeholders in decision making regarding ongoing professional learning opportunities.  |
| Develop a survey of learning needs from parents, students, and educators that can be used to match available resources to actual need.   | Continue annual surveys of parents, learners, and educators to update professional learning needs.                            |  |   |
| Take inventory of currently available professional learning resources related to language and literacy, including human resources, media sources, and professional literature. Analyze language and literacy achievement and school readiness data. Use data analysis and resource inventory to highlight strengths and gaps in professional learning. | Add professional learning resources that support educator needs, such as professional libraries, media –based resources, etc. | Expand and strengthen school, community, and university partnerships to build networks of support for ongoing professional learning. | Continuously update professional learning resources based on identified educator needs  |
| Evaluate all available funding sources to determine what can be leveraged to support literacy efforts.   | Utilize funding resources to target the most pressing professional learning needs.  | Use data from a variety of resources to allocate funding resources to meet professional learning needs.                              | <p>Actively seek to provide resources (fiscal and time) for professional learning.</p> <p>Seek grants to support professional learning.</p> |

| Beginning to Plan   | Beginning to Implement   | Expanding Emphasis   | Sustaining Plan  |
|---|--|--|--|
| Develop a Professional Learning Action Plan with specific and measurable goals for improving literacy using research-based practices at the appropriate age/grade span Birth-Adult. Plan should include goals for individual educator learning as well as the larger learning community, including professional learning opportunities for families and community partners. | Implement the Professional Learning Action Plan  | Continue implementing the Professional Learning Action Plan, differentiating opportunities for educators based on level of experience and documented need. | Continually revise and update Professional Learning Action Plan based on identified learner and educator needs.                    |
| Schedule blocks of time within and outside of the school day for teachers to engage in professional learning and to collaboratively plan lessons, examine learner work, share expertise, and reflect on practice  | Provide time for teachers to engage in professional learning and to meet in collaborative teams to plan lessons, monitor learner progress, and share successful literacy strategies. | Require structured protocols for collaborative work to maximize effectiveness.   | Continue to provide adequate time for job-embedded professional learning and collaboration   |
| Secure a literacy coach and/ or explore use of teacher mentors to provide ongoing, job-embedded support for educators.  | Conduct collaborative sessions in which the literacy coach and/or teacher mentors co-plan, model, practice, and co-teach with educators.   | Use classroom observations to identify and support individual teachers with follow-up coaching, conferencing, and mentoring.                               | Establish an ongoing structure for differentiating coaching/mentoring support for educators to continually improve their practice. |

| <b>Beginning to Plan</b>  | <b>Beginning to Implement</b>   | <b>Expanding Emphasis</b>   | <b>Sustaining Plan</b>  |
|---|---|---|---|
| Identify methods for measuring the effectiveness of professional learning, including use of data. | <p>Implement methods for measuring the effectiveness of professional learning, including:</p> <p>Use of literacy achievement data</p> <p>Observations and walk-throughs to document implementation of practices</p> <p>Measures of educator knowledge</p> | Continue to use multiple methods to evaluate effectiveness of professional learning programs and practices. | Continue to use multiple methods to evaluate effectiveness of professional learning programs and practices. |

## **Appendix B: Descriptions of Statewide Literacy Related Initiatives**

### **• Statewide Early Learning Guidelines for Birth to School Age Five Year Olds**

#### ***Supporting Maine's Infants and Toddlers/Guidelines for Learning and Development***

Adopted in 2005, this document offers parents of infants and toddlers, early childhood professionals, and policy makers a set of guidelines about development and learning. The goals are to help individuals understand what to look for as a baby grows and develops and to aid in understanding that infants' and toddlers' natural learning patterns and abilities can be nurtured in everyday activities occurring in a home or child care setting.

#### ***State of Maine Early Childhood Learning Guidelines (3-5)***

Adopted in 2005, The Maine Early Childhood Learning Guidelines were developed to serve as a guide for state and local early care and education practitioners' efforts to improve early childhood practice and programs for young children ages three through their entrance into kindergarten. The Guidelines are intended to effect greater collaboration and consistency across systems by aligning practices across all early childhood settings. Currently under revision, these guidelines will become part of a web based progression document from Birth through age eight.

### **• Statewide Plan for a Comprehensive Early Childhood System**

The Maine Children's Growth Council is charged in statute to perform specific duties intended to improve the social and financial investments in Maine's youngest children and their families. The Council has adopted the Invest in ME plan and reflects a comprehensive approach, through structured committee work, to ensure ongoing accountability of the system in conjunction with the legislative and executive branches of government, municipal and community leaders, parents, youth and providers.

### **• Early Reading First**

Early Reading First is a project of the U.S. Department of Education, which provides funding to transform existing early childhood education programs into preschool centers of educational excellence. The mission of Early Reading First (ERF) "is to ensure that all children enter kindergarten with the necessary language, cognitive, and early reading skills for continued success in school." Many children enter school without the foundations in vocabulary, ability to attune to the sounds of language, knowledge of the alphabet, and the world of print. Research shows these are critical precursors to reading proficiency. This foundation is particularly lacking in many children from low-income families or those who are English Language Learners. Maine has received two Early Reading First grant awards, one in Waldo county and one in the greater Portland area.

### **• Educare Center**

Through a coast-to-coast network of state-of-the-art programs, Educare serves at-risk children from birth to 5 years. Educare Central Maine is the first Educare site in New England and is designed to serve between 150 and 200 mostly low-income children during

this most critical brain development stage. The goal is to measurably increase their school-readiness and significantly reduce unnecessary special education costs.

Parents and caregivers are essential partners in preparing children for school and Educare Central Maine will support them with education and comprehensive supports to improve health, self-sufficiency and long-term parent and child well-being and success.

A private/public partnership, Educare Central Maine will serve as a state-of-the-art professional development and resource center for child care professionals across the state, as well as a teaching lab for students seeking an early childhood degree in Maine.

- **Maine Reading First**

The Reading First initiative is a federal grant program that supports K-3 classroom teachers and students, as well as K-12 special education teachers and students, to boost reading achievement through ongoing professional development and implementation of comprehensive reading programs. The goal of Reading First is to instill proven methods of early reading instruction into classrooms by establishing a comprehensive program grounded in scientifically-based reading research. Funding supports both statewide professional development for all K-3 regular educators and K-12 special educators, as well as competitive sub-grants to eligible school systems for the implementation of comprehensive reading programs. To date, 23 Maine School Systems have received Maine Reading First sub-grants, impacting 25 schools.

- **Adult Education and Family Literacy**

Through classroom instruction or tutoring, Maine Adult Education and Family Literacy initiatives teach the basic reading comprehension and numeracy skills necessary to function in our literate community. Programming areas include English as a Second Language and Family Literacy, an approach integrating early childhood education and adult education and parenting skills. In FY 11 local adult education programs served over 5,000 adults in need of this type of programming. There were also over 1600 adults engaged in coursework leading them to a high school credential. Maine's adult basic education and family literacy programs are supported by the federal Adult Education and Family Literacy Act (AEFLA) with many local programs also using local tax support and income from other grant sources.



## **Appendix C**

### **Questions for Literacy Leadership Teams to Consider when developing plans:**

- How will educators, learners, community practitioners, parents, and other community members be involved in the plan development?
- What professional learning and other support will educators, parents, community members, and the literacy leadership team members need before and as the plan is initially implemented?
- What leadership functions will be required to implement the plan and what levels of leadership will be responsible for performing these functions? (See toolkit for suggestions of leadership functions by leadership role.)
- What kind of infrastructure will be needed to support the plan implementation (e.g., scheduling for instruction, scheduling for faculty collaboration meetings, norms and protocols for collaboration meetings, and scheduling routine observations)?
- How will the team monitor plan implementation?
- How will plan implementation and outcomes be communicated to faculty/staff and stakeholders?
- How will the team evaluate the effectiveness of the plan?

### **Ongoing responsibilities of the literacy leadership team include:**

- Supporting a child and family centered climate of collaboration, shared decision making, and continuous improvement that promotes and celebrates literacy achievement.
- Coordinating and monitoring components of the literacy plan implementation.
- Collecting multiple sources of evidence/data to track and revise literacy plan implementation as necessary.
- Problem solving implementation challenges with stakeholders.
- Regularly communicating with stakeholders about literacy plan implementation and its impact on teaching and learning.
- Exploring and recommending policy decisions to institutionalize plan components that have resulted in increased learner achievement.
- Examining transition plans for learners over time to ensure that consistent outcomes for student learning are in place and that instruction and assessment practices are well aligned.
- Seeking support from community partners to strengthen and increase effective practices, including extended learning opportunities.